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# PEROT TELLS LARGE RALLY OF DEATH THREAT

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By Michael Isikoff

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Ross Perot said yesterday that he has been targeted for assassination by a "Mafia-like" group working to pass the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Speaking to 3,000 people cheering his anti-NAFTA message at a rally in Tampa, Perot said the FBI had relayed information that the unidentified pro-NAFTA organization had recruited six Cubans to kill him -- possibly at the rally or during his scheduled Tuesday night debate here with Vice President Gore.

A federal law enforcement source said last night that Perot's comments appeared to be based on thirdhand information passed to the FBI by an anonymous telephone tipster. The source added that the Justice Department was unaware of any threat against Perot by any pro-NAFTA organization.

Perot said a Tampa police officer had handed him a note yesterday morning from the FBI describing the plot. The assassination attempt "would take place in Tampa or at the debate in Washington. . . . The organization is a Mafia-like group in favor of the North American Free Trade Agreement," he said.

"I am willing to stand up here like a clay pigeon, if you will write your congressman," Perot told the rally, which ended without incident. "Let him know you don't want NAFTA. I'm not worried about these dudes getting their acts together and doing something to me."

Tampa police Capt. B.K. Winton said an FBI agent said "two death threats" had been made against Perot.

The federal law enforcement official said the Los Angeles FBI office had received a call Saturday night from an Albuquerque "tip line called 'We Tip' " about the alleged plot. An anonymous caller to the tip line reported that he was with a man who spoke no English and who claimed to have just gotten out of a Mexican prison where he had heard "there was a six-member Cuban hit squad that was going to 'take out' Ross Perot," according to the source.

FBI officials in Los Angeles alerted Tampa police and the Secret Service because of the upcoming debate with Gore, the source said. Senior Justice Department officials were not

alerted because the threat was not given that much credibility and it did not match any other intelligence reports, the source said.

"There's no way of verifying these things; you can't determine the authenticity," Oliver B. "Buck" Revell, special agent in charge of the Dallas FBI office, told the Los Angeles Times. "It could be totally legitimate. It could be a hoax."

Over the years, Perot, who received 19 percent of the vote in last year's presidential election, has claimed he was the target of death plots by North Vietnamese communists upset about his efforts to free American prisoners of war, Black Panthers and Texas drug dealers. Last year, he asserted during an interview on CBS's "60 Minutes" that he aborted his initial exploratory presidential campaign because he learned that a Republican "dirty tricks" squad had wiretapped his Dallas business office and was planning to disrupt his daughter's wedding and smear her with a faked photograph.

No evidence to support Perot's assertions ever surfaced, and they were vehemently denied by Republican campaign officials. Perot later acknowledged that some of his information came from a former California police officer described by federal law enforcement sources as a publicity-seeking hoaxster upon whom Perot occasionally has relied for tips about the fate of Americans missing in action during the Vietnam War.

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